CHAPTER – IV

ROLE OF MEDICAL REPRESENTATIVE IN
PHARMACEUTICAL MARKETING AND
PROMOTION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Medical sales representatives are a key link between medical and pharmaceutical companies and healthcare professionals. They sell their company’s products, which include medicines, prescription drugs and medical equipment to a variety of customers including general practices, primary care trusts, hospitals and pharmacies. They also work strategically to increase the awareness and use of their company’s pharmaceutical and medical products.

Medical sales representatives are usually based in a specific geographical location and specialize in a particular product or medical area. They may also make presentations and organize group events for healthcare professionals, as well as working with contacts on a one-to-one basis.

4.1.1 Role of Medical Representatives

Pharmaceutical marketers are always trying to figure out the answer to the question - what does a doctor expect from a medical representative? Given an opportunity, they will pose this question to “friendly” doctors, to gain insights into customers’ expectations. Of course, it’s not that Pharmaceutical marketers are unaware of what doctors expect - in fact, they do know - but yet they keep searching for a revelation.

The answer is simple enough. The doctor expects very little from a Medical Representative (MR). He would expect “detailing”, of course, and he’d also expect to see some promotional literature, receive some samples and perhaps a small gift. Since the doctor meets several medical representatives every day, he knows what to expect.
In any case, most of the calls would fit into the dull-to-boring category - so what’s the big deal?

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Maybe that’s why pharma marketers keep searching for answers! The average call on a doctor may not be anything to rave about, but doctors continue to see several Medical Representatives every day, suggesting that the two species do have an affinity for each other. Both the parties involved in the doctor-MR association stand to gain - the medical representative gets product sales and the doctor gets new information and access to the services that a pharmaceutical company can provide.

Perhaps the Medical Representative’s visit also provides the doctor with a welcome break in an otherwise exacting routine. Pharmaceutical marketers look for ways to convert this break into a breakthrough, but with several companies wooing the doctor at any time, staying ahead of the competition involves knowing what the customer expects and then finding ways to meet or surpass those expectations.

The average Medical Representatives may not make the mark, but the chances are that a successful one will be right on track. So maybe we should look at the ideal situation - what would a doctor expect from the ideal medical representative? Much has been said about the characteristics of an ideal Medical Representatives. We could make a list of favoured characteristics for medical representatives involving every letter of the alphabet - alert, bold, competent, dependable, energetic, friendly, genial,
honest, intelligent, job-oriented, etc., or we could even look for adjectives with a single letter, e.g., courteous, careful, career-minded, capable, clever, committed, communicative, competent, confident, consistent, etc. Such lists are likely to be flashed around during Medical Representatives orientation or training programmes and usually reflects the characteristics that managers expect their representatives to possess. However, doctors’ expectations need not coincide with those of the manager. A doctor is generally only concerned with the role of the Medical Representatives in his clinic, whereas a manager would look for more.

A Medical Representatives spends just a few minutes perhaps once or twice every month in each doctor’s clinic. Each call is probably sandwiched between many others clamouring for attention, and is in any case only a side issue for a doctor whose primary concern is managing his patients. What could a doctor expect from a Medical Representatives in such a situation? What would anyone expect? A jovial Medical Representatives? A talkative fellow? A combination of several characteristics? We would definitely need many adjectives to make a complete list of the characteristics that doctors would like medical representatives to have. But remember, the more exhaustive the list, the more bewildering it will be to the Medical Representatives who is expected to possess all those traits. So for simplicity, can we sum up the doctor’s expectations in just a single word?

The burden of narrowing down doctors’ expectations to just a single word seems like a tremendous responsibility - sifting through all those adjectives in the dictionary for the right one! But if one must select, then as per the number of studies a doctor would expect the ideal medical representative to be impressive.

Make an impression, an impact, make a mark - and to make it again and again with every visit. From the medical representative’s point of view, it would obviously mean that the customer is impressed - and what more can one ask for? Being impressive also means standing out in a crowd and getting that promotional message home. With the customer being impressed, the salesperson is well on his way to sales success. But to get there, every visit to a doctor must be considered to be a performance, the equivalent of a television advertisement for a consumer product.
There would be no such thing as a “routine” visit to a doctor. Like any great performance, it requires practice and should be fine tuned till it is just right. And of course, the product usage that follows a great presentation is the best form of applause that a salesperson can receive.

In any setting, the process of selling involves contacting potential customers, identifying their needs, persuading them that your products or services (rather than those of competitors) can best satisfy those needs, closing the sale by agreeing the terms and conditions, and providing an after-sales service. Medical sales representatives do all of this and more.

In particular, typical work activities OF Medical Representatives include:

- Arranging appointments with doctors, pharmacists and hospital medical teams, which may include pre-arranged appointments or regular 'cold' calling;
- Making presentations to doctors, practice staff and nurses in GP surgeries, hospital doctors and pharmacists in the retail sector. Presentations may take place in medical settings during the day or may be conducted in the evenings at a local hotel or conference venue;
- Organising conferences for doctors and other medical staff;
- Building and maintaining positive working relationships with medical staff and supporting administrative staff e.g. receptionists;
- Managing budgets (for catering, outside speakers, conferences, hospitality, etc);
- Keeping detailed records of all contacts;
- Reaching (and if possible exceeding) annual sales targets;
- Planning work schedules and weekly and monthly timetables. This may involve working with the area sales team or discussing future targets with the area sales manager. Generally, medical sales executives have their own regional area of responsibility and plan how and when to target health professions;
- Regularly attending company meetings, technical data presentations and briefings;
• Keeping up with the latest clinical data supplied by the company and interpreting, presenting and discussing this data with health professionals during presentations;
• Monitoring competitor activity and competitors' products;
• Maintaining knowledge of new developments in The National Health Service (NHS), anticipating potential negative and positive impacts on the business and adapting strategy accordingly;
• Developing strategies for increasing opportunities to meet and talk to contacts in the medical and healthcare sector;
• Staying informed about the activities of health services in a particular area.

4.2 TECHNIQUES OF PHARMACEUTICAL PROMOTION

Pharmaceutical marketing is the last element of an information continuum, where research concepts are transformed into practical therapeutic tools and where information is progressively layered and made more useful to the health care system. Thus, transfer of information to physicians through marketing is a crucial element of pharmaceutical innovation. By providing an informed choice of carefully characterized agents, marketing assists physicians in matching drug therapy to individual patient needs. Pharmaceutical marketing is presently the most organized and comprehensive information system for updating physicians about the availability, safety, efficacy, hazards, and techniques of using medicines. The costs of pharmaceutical marketing are substantial, but they are typical of high-technology industries that must communicate important and complex information to sophisticated users. These costs are offset by savings resulting from proper use of medicines and from lower drug costs owing to price competition.

Pharmaceutical marketing is the business of advertising or otherwise promoting the sale of pharmaceuticals or drugs. Marketing plays a key role influencing or directing activities from the manufacturer to the patient. It is the demand from the consumer that determines which goods will be produced. Any pharmaceutical company that wants to serve its market has to endeavour in direct marketing activities so that the right product is sold in the right quantity in the right place at the right time.
The aim is to change from a non-usage of a product to usage or repeated usage. (30) There are different buying stages of healthcare professionals in which the pharmaceutical companies have to make their product known:

### 4.2.1 Unawareness to Awareness

During this stage the product is not known at all by the doctor/pharmacist and in which the medicinal drug moves from no knowledge towards a situation where doctors knows about it. In this stage marketing has two purposes:

- Telling the doctor that your product exists
- Creating an association between the therapeutic area and the product

### 4.2.2 Awareness to Interest

This is a movement from a passive stage to an active stage of attention. The doctors will have his curiosity motivated by the products’ newness, appearance, or concept. The marketing objectives in this stage are:

- Gaining his attention through promotion
- Creating interest or a motivation towards the product
- Providing a summary information of the product

### 4.2.3 Interest to Evaluation

At this stage, the professional will consider the effect of the product upon his motivations i.e. lifestyle or image. The doctors will analyze, rationalize, and look for advantages with the new product. Depending on what the doctors needs, such as improved efficacy, more economy, the uniqueness of the drug and safety. Marketing at this stage attempts to:

- Encourages the doctor to start his study of the drug
- Find the requirements of the healthcare professional
- Segment and target the doctors according to the requirements of the professional
4.2.4 Evaluation to Trial
This is the key movement for the evaluation stage in which he/she is still considering the product to actually using it. Marketing from the company at this stage has to:
• Identify usage opportunities
• Suggest the usage when the opportunities occur

4.2.5 Trial to Usage
When the trial is successful, the professional will move to usage in prescribing the product. The pharmaceutical company at this point has to:
• Provide reminders of key elements such as brand, therapy area and the advantages of usage
• Emphasise the success and the approval of prescribing the product
• Remind the prospective subscriber of usage prospects and present proof of other doctors usage and success.

4.2.6 Usage to Repeat Usage
This is the final objective for marketing. When a healthcare professional moves from the occasional use to constant use, they move into a stage of automatically selecting the particular prescription drug. At this stage the company has to:
• Maintain the environment that has led to satisfaction
• Keep a satisfactory image
• Keep confirming and reminding the healthcare professional of the key qualities of the product

From the first stage of introducing the product, right through the final stage of usage to repeated usage, the company will try to influence the doctors choice in choosing their particular products with the help of Medical Representatives’ and other initiatives.
4.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING PRESCRIPTION

To successfully influence prescription behavior, Marketers must understand various factors i.e. Interaction with Patients, Medical representatives' attributes, Drug characteristics, Promotion, Price of drug, Availability and their relative importance perceived by the doctors in prescription decision-making. Especially Marketers must focus on improving product knowledge and communication skills of Medical Representatives to gain competitive advantage. Many factors affect prescription behavior through complex interactions. A research by Bamoriya (2011) suggests marketers to judiciously plan medical representatives' visits to doctors as numbers of visit in a month directly affects qualitative and quantitative prescription behavior. Further prescription behavior is claimed to be affected by Specialty and Length of practice of Doctor. Detailing positively affects prescription behavior, but that high-volume doctors, while being detailed more, are less responsive to detailing as compared to low-volume doctors (Manchanda & Chintagunta 2004).

Delivering high-quality care is important for all health care providers. Health care purchasers are now focusing on identifying which individual physicians deliver good care most efficiently. Physicians’ efficiency has been evaluated in terms of quality of prescribing treatment method and adherence to clinical guidelines. The evaluation of physicians’ prescribing decisions is worthy of attention because physicians need to choose effective medicine for appropriate patients according to guidelines.

A large number of studies have reported physicians’ prescribing decisions. Most of those studies used a patient simulation model, a postal questionnaire, or interviews. However, in the actual clinical situation, physicians have limited time to deliberate on all issues a patient may face.

4.3.1 Quality of Detailing

Physicians meet the salesforce of various drug companies for a variety of reasons. These reasons include gathering of information about specific drugs, to obtain free samples and to stay in touch with developments in the medical practice (Lexchin, 1989). Thus the quality of detailing in terms of prescription effectiveness
depends, among other factors, on the number of free samples handed out to the physician.

4.4 MEDICAL REPRESENTATIVES: POSITION IN SALES FORCE

A Medical Representative represents the connecting thread between clinical and Pharmaceutical industry. In some ways a Medical Representative does consultative selling by providing detailed knowledge of company's products to the medical practitioners. A Medical Representative is primarily responsible for generating business for his company by sharing benefits of the company's existing drugs, knowledge about new drugs and researches with Doctors. He is also a great source for collecting valuable feedback and data from Doctors, Druggist, Chemist, and sometimes even from patient about the company's various drugs. This market research is later used for future marketing and R&D initiatives.

Since a Medical Representative is almost like a Front Line Sales guy for a pharmaceutical company, it is quite obvious that hiring the right person for the role is also of utmost importance. The aim of this study is to determine whether a candidate's aptitude and personality be used to predict his job success as a Medical Representative in a pharma company.

4.4.1 Personality and Aptitude as Job Performance Predictor for Medical Representatives

Post 1990 a large body of scientific researchers have come to believe that Personality traits of a person can predict his/her performance in a Sales role capacity. (Arneson, Milikin-Davies & Hogan, 1993; Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick, Mount & Strauss, 1993; Vinchur, et al., 1998). Major findings of these studies was that Personality traits, specifically 'Conscientiousness' and 'Extraversion' was found to be a valid predictor of success for a Sales person in various organizations. Barrick and Mount (1991) showed that, on average, personality variables were correlated strongly with subjective appraisals of job performance with an average validity of $r = 0.26$. 
In pharmaceutical industry also, Medical Representatives performance is closely related to their Aptitude and Personality. As gatekeepers of sensitive information, it is critical that pharmaceutical sales representatives have trusting relationships with potential customers. In fact, a recent meta-analysis of the sales literature uncovered a significant positive association between customer trust perceptions and sales performance (Swan, Bowers, & Richardson, 1998). A study compared the influence of Big Five Personality factors on the overall sales performance of Medical Representatives employed in a large pharmaceutical company responsible for detailing or educating physicians on existing products and strategic targeting of high-potential client physicians vs. Sales Force in the same company responsible for product launch of a new medication. The results indicated that for Medical Representatives, conscientiousness and extraversion were positively associated with their job performance and for New Product Sales force, agreeableness and openness to experience predicted overall performance. (Thoresen CJ, Bradley JC, Bliese PD, Thoresen JD, 2004).

4.5 TRAINING OF MEDICAL REPRESENTATIVES

Every pharmaceutical company employs and trains Medical Representatives to promote and sell drugs, using printed product literatures, drug samples and gifts. Besides the salaries, they also receive incentives for achievement of sales targets, which might tilt the balance in favour of aggressive drug promotion.

Name is not all what it takes to get into the mind space of a busy doctor. Every product, old or new, requires extensive marketing. Any busy consultant will vouch that if a particular company’s Medical Representatives fails to show up for over a month, he suspects the availability of the products of that manufacturer. In such a scenario if a patient were to call up the physician and inform him that he did not get that particular brand, the physician would assume that there is a genuine problem of its availability. And with that assumption, further prescription of that brand would stop forthwith. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary for the manufacturer to keep track of the Medical Representative’s performance.
Medical Representative used to be important factor in pharmaceutical marketing. The falling standard with respect to their product knowledge, negative attitude, and the image of the Medical Representatives as an information provider is disturbing. Pharmaceutical industry is realizing this situation and conducts a training programme for Medical Representatives.

It has been observed that managers are trained but Medical Representatives are very rarely had refresher's course. A soldier should be trained well enough so that they know how to get success or win war in marketing battle field. In case such training facilities are not provided to them the company will definitely not only go down in growth but will not have enough productivity per man as training is crucial to keep Medical Representatives updated and motivated.

4.5.1 Role of Medical Representatives

Medical Representatives are the key contacts between the pharmaceutical industry and the medical profession. They have the responsibility of promoting their companies major products directly to GP's and hospital doctors. They do this via face to face meetings or medical presentations at various types of meetings. All representatives tend to work what is a called a 'territory'.

The image of the product and the company that a doctor forms is directly related to the degree of professionalism exhibited by the Medical Representatives. This position therefore demands a high level of integrity and commitment to the company and its products.

4.5.2 Evolution in Process

Against this background, the imperative for sales force change has been widely debated but less is known about the nature of the changes and the extent to which new models are actually being considered by different companies in India.

4.5.3 Medical Representatives Role can be defined as a Five-stage Process

1. Mass detailing (the arms race)
2. Which is followed by target-driven detailing (initial moves towards an improved understanding of the customer)?
3. After this, comes resourcing to potential (defined as putting resources only where the potential demands it, along with additional sales force flexibility for adjustment and adaptation), and then
4. Precision tailoring (moving towards key account management and team selling with much greater levels of customer understanding).
5. The final stage is to become fully customer-centric, and this varies significantly by organisation, portfolio and market.

4.5.4 Shift to a Key Account Management Approach

The progression of sales force change clearly impacts a number of key sales areas. Of particular interest is the role of the Medical Representative which can be seen to move from a walking ad board, through to a key account manager responsible for relationship building and increasing customer value, to a regional manager responsible for his own profit and loss.

The concept of account management is managing the other resources, such as the sales force, the value added services, the training programmes pharma company can give, so that a holistic approach to detailing, rather than individual representatives talking about individual products..

In today’s pharmaceutical marketing scenario the roles have reconfigured. For example, first-line managers have moved to a key account management role, or business account unit manager. The traditional first-line manager role just wasn't working any more. They have to have many of the same skills.

The shift to a key account management approach also calls for the need to compensate differently. Historically, compensation rested on the basis of pure sales metrics, but in the future, Medical representative will be equally measured on strength of relationships, and softer, customer value-based metrics will come into play.

4.5.5 A New Look Medical Representative

Some of the key value metrics shows that a modern Medical representative needs to be able to adjust his or her interactions to the available time, and these
interactions must be engaging in style. A medical representative should also be a continuing source of unbiased product information, coupled with a varied message.

Obviously, these relationship-based questions will require new types of qualitative studies to measure performance adequately at the individual account manager level. These types of measures will then need to be combined with traditional sales and activity measures to create a fair system of compensation relating to the new emerging role of key account manager.

Another important consequence of moving towards a customer-centric approach involves the changing role of what used to be the first-line manager. Whereas typically, this position has been used to enforce the coverage and frequency goals of the Medical Representative in a region, in the future, it will move much more towards (initially) a business coach, before making the transition to the role of a true business owner of the customers, stakeholders and influencers in the total prescribing chain.

Other areas, such as message delivery and use of flip charts, will also be affected. Message delivery will need to be more customized to the particular stakeholder involved; while flip charts will move from being used to support the arms race to being used to enable flexibility in using resources regionally.

4.5.6 Changes on the Horizon

Interaction with various pharmaceutical executives, underscores the pharmaceutical companies lead in terms of advanced approaches to sales models. Many pharmaceutical companies in India are already some way into the sales force reorganization process, having changed the size and structure of their sales forces to the point, in some cases, of having fully redesigned their complete sales model.

4.5.7 Change and Reorganization

But one thing is clear, responding to the need for new sales models is one thing, actually making the change is quite another. During the completion of many sales model and resource optimisation assignments, there appear to be several elements that are critical to successful implementation.
Planning for change is the first of these, as is having a true change management programme in place as an essential part of achieving positive results when moving to a new sales model. The process of rolling out change to the sales force also has to be managed.

The retraining of existing Medical Representatives and the hiring of new ones to allow integration of newly created roles in the sales force are vital, but can be very challenging especially when higher-skilled sales resources are required to implement key account management roles where the talent pool available (both internally and externally) can be thin.

With reorganisation, often comes the move to a new compensation system, and this can affect the full performance management process within the sales force. Impacts can be felt in re-defining key result areas (KRA’s), updating reporting systems, as well as in the compensation system and payout schemes.

When considering marketing, it is important to increase the degree of trust and credibility with the key stakeholders and then messaging should be customised to the different audiences in relation to the level of achievement in these factors. Finally, the ability to adapt to change much more flexibly, in shorter time-frames and on a local basis, is critical.

4.5.8 Future Model

The pharmaceutical industry is at a critical point in its evolution. The days of the highly profitable and frequently available blockbuster are coming to an end, and in their place, is a challenging transition period.

Other industries have gone through similar changes in the past, the most notable being the finance sector. There, the self-same change process approximately 10 years ago saw the customer positioned firmly at the centre of all marketing and sales activities.

In place of products came customised campaign themes, based around individual profiles. Instead of the standard product Medical Representatives, there
were preferred banking advisors looking at clients' total needs, and after the replacement of the standard bank came new channels, such as online banking and direct marketing to the individual.

4.5.9 Outsourcing Radar Picks up Medical Representatives

Indian pharmaceutical companies are outsourcing a portion of their Medical Representatives workforce, in a bid to become more competitive. The move supports expansion into newer geographies in the domestic market, and could be aimed at reducing the hold of trade unions.

Pharmaceutical companies are testing waters in new states and are launching products in relatively distant pockets through third parties. As India is a party to WTO's intellectual property regime from January 2005, the basket of drugs available with a patent prior to 1995 is getting smaller.

Hiring contracted medical representatives is a recent trend in the Indian pharma industry. "This is a very common practice in markets around the world, however, it has appeared in India in the past couple of years," Brian Tempest, chief mentor and executive vice-chairman, Ranbaxy Laboratories told. Global pharma companies such as GlaxoSmithKline, Abbott, Allergan and Pfizer work with contracted medical representatives on a regular basis, notably in the US and the UK.

In India, Novartis, E-Merck, USV, IDPL, Jagsonpal, Cipla, Ranbaxy Labs and Nicholas Piramal outsource part of their sales force to third parties, according to the Federation of Medical and Sales Representatives Association of India (FMRAI), a national trade union.

According to industry sources, 20-25% of Novartis' sales force, for instance, is hired through Innovex, a joint venture set up by Quintiles -the world's largest contract research organisation - Temasek and Zuellig Pharma, a China-based logistics service provider. The key is flexibility of operations for a wider reach.

Hiring contracted Medical Representatives also allows pharmaceutical companies to break trade unions, once a very strong force in the industry. The
contract sales organisations are fully responsible for hiring Medical Representatives. The appointment letter is from the contract sales organisation wherein the medical representative can work for any client with whom the contract sales organisation ties up.

Many MNCs in India such as E-Merck too are outsourcing medical representatives' work. MNCs cannot increase their manpower in India because of budget constraints. Hiring contracted medical representatives allows them to expand their reach in the market, without taking the liability associated with hiring new people.

While most MNCs in India work with organised contract service providers, such as Innovex or human resource consulting companies such as Ma Foi, domestic companies have opted for a different outsourcing model. The more popular part of medical representatives outsourcing has been the franchisee concept, wherein the distributors of pharmaceutical companies set up a field force to promote the mature products of the company.

Bangalore-based Charak Pharma was among the first companies in India to outsource medical representatives through franchisees. According to industry sources, the company's UP franchisee employs over 50 medical representatives, while its Chennai franchisee employs around 40. Outsourcing medical representatives can prove to be cost effective as the pharmaceutical company has zero liability.

Nicholas Piramal also works with franchisees to promote some of its established products. The company has given a number of its old products to a franchisee, named Jeevan, where the medical representatives do the same work as the direct medical representative of the company, but are maintained under contract.

Cipla too has been outsourcing part of its Medical Representatives through franchises for a certain segment reach. "They will, however, represent less than 5% of their 3,000 sales force."
However, while outsourcing Medical Representatives provides flexibility to pharmaceutical companies and can be more cost effective, doctors can take time to acknowledge a third party selling the products for a client. By bringing someone in between the doctor and the pharmaceutical company, the benefits are not always there.

Unichem Labs worked with franchisees in order to test waters in new states. In addition to their regular employees, Unichem had hired contracted Medical Representatives to promote old products in UP and MP. The company stopped outsourcing Medical Representatives few months ago.

Pfizer's experience was not conclusive either. The company entered into an agreement with Innovex in 2003 to hire around 100 people to promote tail-end products, which have a turnover of about Rs 100 crore. Since then, the company no longer works with third parties to promote its products.

The legal position of such contractual work has also been challenged by FMRAI in court. "Outsourcing of Medical Representatives leads to a significant deterioration of working conditions. Contracted medical representatives are discriminated against. Their salary is less and they have no job security, affecting their productivity due to low motivation.

Finally, contracting medical representatives raises major organisational issues, experts feel. While it offers flexibility and costs advantages, pharma companies will soon need to look at alternatives to expand their reach to new territories.

4.5.10 Making Sales Forces Leaner and Meaner

From debate to delivery – current study looked at the evolving sales models and the new style of Medical Representatives in a rapidly changing Indian pharmaceutical market.

The world of pharmaceutical sales force management is witnessing a serious move away from mass detailing to a system based on key account management and other innovative sales approaches.
The market trends pushing this change revolve around shifts among key stakeholders - pharmaceutical companies, healthcare professionals and regulatory bodies alike - under-productive sales forces driven by a decreasing number of large blockbuster primary care products in R&D pipelines and, until recently, an ever-increasing number of product details.

Many pharmaceutical manufacturers in India are already introducing newly restructured sales models in response to these market changes. Healthcare professionals have reacted by reducing access to pharmaceutical companies’ just as new and more varied decision-makers weigh into the prescribing choice, and the roles of formularies, nurses, pharmacists and key opinion leaders are also having an impact on traditional sales models.

Pharmaceutical firms invest heavily in their sales force, which is strategically allocated among physicians. Pharmaceutical sales force investments, also referred to as detailing, have more than doubled over the last decade to $25 billion in 2005 (Donohue et al. 2007). There is an extensive debate in the academic literature in marketing over whether such intensive detailing positively affects prescriptions, with some authors finding positive, but often modest, effects (e.g. Manchanda and Honka 2005; Mizik and Jacobson 2004).

The scholarly literature has heavily debated the responsiveness of customers to sales calls in various industries and its measurement (Hanssens et al. 2009). Unfortunately, it has largely overlooked an important firm decision, namely the information content that is provided in sales calls and its effects on customers’ sales call responsiveness. This lack of attention to information content in the personal selling literature contrasts sharply with the attention it received in the advertising literature.

Pharmaceutical industry; is an industry in which scholars have found a particularly large heterogeneity in sales call effectiveness. In this industry, representatives of pharmaceutical firms visit medical doctors to promote prescription of their firm’s drugs (a practice, typically referred to as pharmaceutical detailing). This industry presents an ideal context to examine information content in sales calls
for several reasons. Pharmaceutical detailing expenditures are very large ($6.3 billion in 2009 in the U.S. according to IMS Integrated Promotional Services, which does not include sampling costs). In the drug category (i.e. statins) we examine, a handful of firms spend more than $400 million annually on detailing. Pharmaceutical detailing is also very well documented by data suppliers, such as IMS Health, which has reliable data on information content in detailing visits.

Information content in pharmaceutical sales calls and doctors’ responsiveness is a primary public policy concern and of high managerial interest. On multiple occasions, people have expressed concerns that the information in pharmaceutical sales calls consists of a positively biased, sometimes even illegal, subset of drug information. Also firms are grappling with the optimal information content in detailing visits. The industry, under increasing societal scrutiny, is considering a new sales model that should provide the doctor with exactly the right information more effectively.

Finally, government regulation and policy decisions have resulted in price reductions, increased use of generics, ever stronger prescribing guidelines and an increased need for pharmaco-economics research, data and proof points to achieve reimbursement.

4.6 CONCLUSION

Pharmaceutical industry in India is still plagued with some very serious strategic and operational level issues such as increased competition, low level of customer knowledge (doctors, retailers, wholesalers), good product mix and excellent marketing strategies but poor customer acquisition, very high attrition rate of the sales personnel, very high territory development costs, the number and the quality of medical representatives, busy physicians giving less time for sales calls, virtually no mechanism of sales forecasting from field sales level, leading to huge deviations, absence of analysis on the amount of time invested on profitable and not-so-profitable customers and lack of time-share planning towards developing customer base for future markets etc. etc.,
For marketing pharma products companies require more field force to remind their direct customer (doctor) of their products on a daily basis. Moreover field force should have good knowledge of product schemes/offers and good rapport with retailers. Field force also ensures availability of their products to convince doctors and PUSH their products.

Given the fact that personality and cognitive skills when combined together can make such a significant impact on the job success of Sales personnel in the Pharmaceutical industry, it seems only natural that a standardized assessment of both of these should be an essential part of every Medical Representative's recruitment process. Companies can significantly increase their organizational effectiveness and reduce attrition by using personality and cognitive skills as performance predictors of potential hires to select Medical Representatives who are predisposed to have a Sales Disposition.

The most important conclusion of this study was that the cognitive skills combined with personality assessments can be used to select high performing Medical Representative. Having said that, personality traits alone should not be the means on which to base selection decisions, instead, organizations can utilize personality testing to complement the traditional methods of screening job applicants, such as interviews and job applications, thereby increasing their employee performance while minimizing costs.